1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

Debt and Servitude

426 593 466 It seems to be not uncommon for a Toda to die in debt, and it is the duty of the sons to pay off the debts of their father. If there are no children, the payment of the debt is regarded as the duty of the brothers of the dead man.

When children have to pay the debts of their father, they may give their services to others, receiving in return money and other recompense. The usual pay is six rupees a year, two cloaks, and food. To this is often added the loan of a milking buffalo.

This custom of working for another is called *kûlvatkerthchi* or *kûlvatkerthiti*. Several of the eight sons of Pushteidi and Keitan (6) are now working to pay their father's debts. Two of the sons are married to one woman and live at one of their own villages, where they look after the buffaloes of the family. Another brother is unmarried, but lives with a Teivali woman. The other five sons are unmarried and work for various people. One is employed on a tea estate, and the others are working for different Todas, who reward them in the manner already described. The milking buffaloes lent to them are handed over to the charge of the brothers who are married.

[582] It is very exceptional to find a family in which so many of the men are unmarried, and this was said to be due to the necessity of paying off their father's debt. In this case the two eldest brothers have remained unmarried, but this was said to have been due to their own choice. It seems that it is left to the family to decide which of them shall marry and which shall undertake the duty of paying the debt. As soon as the debt is paid off, all the sons are allowed to marry.

The Position of Women

562 There is no doubt that women have a subordinate position in the Toda community. The ceremonial of the dairy has a predominant place in the lives and thoughts of the people, and the exclusion of women from any share in this ceremonial must have influenced the attitude of the

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

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The general type of the Toda character is most unvarying; singularly frank, affable, and self-possessed, cheerful yet staid: respectful, seemingly from a sense of conscious inferiority rather than from an active principle: fearless, from small cause for fear more than from the stimulus of a latent power of opposiveness: communicative, yet watchful and shy, as if their natures impelled them to divulge what their natures also prompted them to maintain quiet: willing to take money,[1] yet accepting what is proffered with callousness, allowing it to lie on the ground or their children to play with it. In villages without an article *de luxe* beyond a few women's ornaments, one may see naked children decorated liberally with small coin. The investment was no doubt safe round their necks and loins, but the very safety implies an absence of theft and violence, which is fully confirmed by the testimony of the law courts of the district. Their main crimes appear to consist in struggles to avoid payment of their debts for money borrowed on bonds from the Badagas.

According to superior notions, they are not a moral race; yet a knowledge of many little facts that could not well be recorded, leaves the impression on my mind that they have certain limits in decent custom (well understood by them, though rarely primitive to our civilised conceptions of what is respectable) which are probably not often transgressed. I could not hope, without a far greater knowledge of the people than could be obtained except by residing long amongst them, to give anything approaching a just definition of their private ways. I fancy, however, that they are less bounded by acknowledged rule than by the gentleness and simplicity, though rude nature, of their character.

Though their intellect is of a very inferior order, and their force of character extremely small, and no great man of

[1] The Todas living in proximity to the haunts of Englishmen, do not hesitate to importune for money with the greatest and most childlike pertinacity; yet if unsuccessful are not a bit distressed.

10: Emeneau L-5 (1935-1937) 1938
AW60 Toda AW60

from the plains on the Tamilian side of the hills, either directly or through Kurumba middlemen. The details of these last transactions have been almost entirely forgotten through disuse. At the present time rice is obtained in the bazaars of Ootacamund and probably Kotagiri, chiefly from the Chettis, who also supply all the cloaks worn by the Todas and the waistcloths put on corpses at funerals, as well as many other articles. These articles are paid for chiefly with milk and ghee. While the milk of sacred buffaloes is too sacred to be thus profaned, the sanctity has been removed by the time it reaches the ghee-stage, and ghee may be sold, irrespective of its origin. The transactions with the Chettis are not allowed by them to be profitable to the Todas. If a Toda has only a few buffaloes, he is always in debt. And even a Toda with a fair number of buffaloes will usually be in debt. This starts during the dry season when the buffaloes give little milk and ghee is scarce. The Chetti is usually asked for credit and once this begins, the Toda can seldom free himself even if he suffers no accidental misfortune such as the death of a buffalo. The complicated transfers of buffaloes at ceremonies undoubtedly play a large part in the impoverishment of many Todas, as well as the slaughter of buffaloes at funerals, and certain ceremonies involving feasts complete the process. Under this system of traffic in the bazaar the Todas as a tribe are never free of debt. When the Toda Amelioration Scheme was initiated some years ago under the aegis of Government, it was considered that the first step to be taken was the paying off of the Todas' debts and this was done by Government. The Scheme was unsuccessful (see below) and the debts have grown again.

The Badagas, as has been said above, still continue their contributions to the Todas, while the Todas supply them with a small amount of produce and make various other small returns. The economic interchange between Kotas and Todas continues. This takes the form chiefly of a supply of tools and pots and the playing of music at funerals by the Kotas, and in return they acquire the carcasses and hides of the buffaloes slaughtered at funerals, a certain amount of ghee, and occasionally other articles. In both cases it seems probable that the Todas are the gainers in the total of transactions. The continuance of these interchanges

10:Emeneau L-5 (1935-1937) 1938
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the chief changes, payment of vows to Hindu temples and a belief in a supreme god, were already firmly established thirty-five years ago, and even these have had little effect on the firm core of Toda religious life, important as the payment of vows is in Toda eyes, since they have been merely additions and have set up no conflicts within the old pattern. In social matters such changes as can be seen are mere surface additions, again causing no conflict within the pattern. The innovation in marriage customs attempted by kum:ja/f and recorded by Rivers, which would have produced stress, has been eliminated by the conservatism of the tribe. Most change is seen in economic life, and that in the way of gradual impoverishment through alienation of land and contracting debts in the bazaars, which had set in long before Rivers made his description. Change in the pattern has not yet resulted, in spite of the abortive attempt that was made by the Toda Amelioration Scheme to add agriculture to the life of pastoralists. If a prediction is worth anything, it may be guessed that so long as the economic system is guarded against breakup, as it is now, the tribe will remain as it is now and as it was thirty-five years ago.

There remains the important question of the effect of outside influences on the population figures of the Todas. Rivers in 1906 recorded his conclusion (p. 475): " The Census Reports and the genealogical record agree in pointing to a diminution of the Toda population about the middle of the last century which has now ceased, the probability being that the Todas are increasing slightly in number.....Any decrease....was the direct result of the changes brought about by the advent of Europeans to the Nilgiri Hills." He goes on to refer especially to the influences, injurious to fertility, of syphilis and sexual immorality, and we should surely add gonorrhea. By sexual immorality he seems to mean especially intercourse between women of the tribe and men of other communities. This, though it undoubtedly occurs, is probably of minor importance as compared with the normal system within the tribe. It is probable that the great freedom of sexual intercourse permitted to women by the polyandrous system combined with the monogotijoj institution by which a woman has at least one " lover " belonging to the other moiety and the freedom to enjoy